United Nations A/C.1/54/PV.10

General Assembly
Fifty-fourth session

Official Records

First Committee
10th Meeting
Monday, 18 October 1999, 3 p.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. González . . . . . (Chile)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda items 64, 65 and 67 to 85 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Mohammed (Ethiopia): The Ethiopian delegation would wish at the outset, Sir, to extend sincere congratulations to you and the other members of the Bureau upon your election. We are confident that, with your rich experience, our deliberations will come to a successful conclusion. You are assured of the support and cooperation of the Ethiopian delegation. We also express our thanks and appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Jayantha Dhanapala for his comprehensive presentation covering the major issues before the Committee.

As in previous years, the Ethiopian delegation attaches great importance to the work of this Committee. We believe that the ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament is attainable only with the much needed political will of all States, especially the nuclear-weapon States. In the absence of this will-power and a commitment to real peace, the security interests of these States can hardly be maintained.

The Secretary-General in his report on the work of the Organization observed that during the past year existing disarmament agreements had been threatened by a number of developments likely to undermine global security. Since we met in this Committee last year, the disarmament machinery of the United Nations has not been fully utilized, and no consensus has been reached on the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to Disarmament, which could set universal goals for the future. For the third successive year, the Disarmament Commission failed to agree on a programme of work and to reach consensus on holding a special session of the General Assembly on disarmament. Little was achieved in the area of progressive reduction of nuclear weapons and their complete elimination.

As a result of these trends, mankind still lives in fear and insecurity, heightened by the pursuit of military doctrines and scientific research that give way to new weapons systems and to nuclear proliferation. We fully agree with the Secretary-General's assertion that the systematic and progressive reduction of nuclear weapons, with the ultimate goal of their complete elimination, should remain one of the priority tasks of the international community. This is so because nuclear disarmament is considered by all States to be one of the most important issues facing the international community. However, a source of concern for us is the continuing refusal of some States to even recognize that this is the case.

Since its adoption, efforts to promote the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) continue. To realize this objective, it is crucial that nuclear-weapon States that have not yet ratified the Treaty as well as those States whose ratification is required for its entry into force ratify the Treaty without delay. Recent developments in this respect constitute a serious setback in the field of nuclear disarmament. As the Secretary-General correctly observed in his report on the work of the organization, the path to the millennium review conference of the parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

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(NPT) will be smoother if there has been progress in this and other areas of nuclear disarmament.

As is well known, the vast majority of States in the southern hemisphere have confirmed their commitment to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty by adhering to nuclear-weapon-free zones. These States have exercised their right recognized under article VII of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty by establishing these zones. Here, it is worth remembering that the Treaty commits nuclear-weapons States to

> "pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to nuclear disarmament, and to a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control."

This commitment has to be realized, in order to check undesirable developments which have appeared in the non-proliferation regime so as to guarantee the irreversibility of the process.

Ethiopia, like many other developing countries, and as a party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and to other international and regional instruments in the field of nuclear disarmament, is committed to the non-proliferation regime and to building a nuclear-free world.

Ethiopia also places great importance on the implementation of both the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention. Thus it is scrupulously implementing provisions of both Conventions and is closely cooperating with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). On many occasions Ethiopia has stressed that the elimination of chemical weapons and the attainment of universal adherence to both Conventions demands a strong commitment by all States. This requires, among other things, the setting up of verification mechanisms. To this end, Ethiopia supports the amendment which envisages the establishment of a verification mechanism for the Biological Weapons Convention and universal adherence to both Conventions.

Another area of great concern for Ethiopia is the destabilizing accumulation and illicit spread of small arms and light weapons. Notwithstanding the legitimate right of States to acquire such weapons for national defence purposes, their proliferation and the illicit trafficking in them pose a significant threat to regional peace and security and to socio-economic development in many parts of the world. The magnitude of this problem is particularly evident in many parts of Africa and in our own subregion of the Horn of Africa, where those bent on destabilizing the countries of the subregion have continued their illicit supply of weapons to terrorists and other armed groups, aimed at waging proxy wars against their neighbours.

Landmines, in particular anti-personnel mines, present the international community with one of its most troubling problems. These weapons continue to pose a serious threat to the lives of millions of people and gravely affect economic, social and humanitarian activities in many parts of the world. The problems they pose are not limited to their indiscriminate use in armed conflicts; they continue to be a serious challenge when conflicts have ended. Measures so far taken by the international community to reverse this situation and find a lasting solution have yet to come to fruition.

While we take great satisfaction in the ongoing efforts of the international community to ban and eliminate landmines, it should be pointed out that the problem of landmines in many conflict areas, particularly in our own subregion, has become a matter of great concern, due to the irresponsible actions of those who have no respect for international norms and rules. Over a million landmines have been planted by armed groups in various parts of Ethiopia, and the arduous and expensive task of clearing them continues; it requires substantial international assistance and cooperation. Mine clearance efforts and international cooperation should also encompass research and development of mine detection technology as well as the transfer of such technology to developing countries to make mine clearance activities safer and more efficient.

Ethiopia, as one of the African countries most affected by landmines, has actively participated in the global effort for a comprehensive world-wide agreement on a total ban of anti-personnel landmines. It is our hope that more States, particularly those responsible for infesting our region with these deadly weapons, will be induced to participate in the Ottawa process and to sign the Treaty.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to underscore its firm conviction that arms control and disarmament are essential to promote peace and development for all peoples. Ethiopia has always attached importance to the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament and will continue to contribute to its success.

Mr. Abelian (Armenia): Let me begin by congratulating you, Sir, upon your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. Our congratulations also go to the other members of the Bureau.

We approach the last year of the millennium still with a heavy burden. Disarmament and international security lie at the very heart of the United Nations system. The Organization was created first and foremost to safeguard mankind from the horrors of global and local wars, from genocide and terrorism, and from ethnic and religious conflicts. No one can say that the United Nations has failed in its mission, but at the same time we have to admit that there are still too many items on the international security agenda, and many of those relate to matters that could seriously endanger the very existence of the human race.

Global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation must remain at the top of the international agenda. It is the responsibility of the entire international community to preserve a world that is safe and secure for the generations to come. As a non-nuclear-weapon State that is developing nuclear energy, Armenia attaches great importance to the issues of international compliance with nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament objectives and obligations. We are here to reaffirm our commitment to full implementation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and to assure the international community that we will continue to use our nuclear capabilities for peaceful purposes only. We urge all the countries which have not yet signed the NPT to do so.

To further ensure the implementation of the NPT's objectives, it is imperative that all countries abide by the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Armenia supports strengthening and improving the effectiveness of the safeguards regime by introducing a protocol additional to existing safeguards agreements. Armenia was the first State with a nuclear power plant to sign the protocol additional to its safeguards agreement. Nuclear safety is a fundamental issue. Universal recognition of the importance of implementing the provisions of the Convention on nuclear safety at national and international levels will promote and maintain the highest standards of safety.

Armenia, which only a decade ago was the vanguard of the Soviet chemical industry, acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) with an underlying commitment to strengthening regional stability. Unfortunately, not all States in the region have taken such a step, and it is hard to see how an effective chemical weapons ban and control regime can be established unless all those in the region are party to the Convention.

As a member of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Armenia will make every effort to further its most pressing task — the universal application of the CWC. In this regard, it is essential to ensure an efficient implementation regime for the Convention. We seek to enhance cooperation among member States as provided for by the Convention on the chemical industry — in particular, cooperation on the exchange of technical information, equipment management and chemical materials production. We also welcome regional economic cooperation within the context of the CWC.

In order to fully prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, it is necessary to focus on the issue of enhancing the implementation and verification regimes. Successful conclusion of the negotiations by the Ad Hoc Group on the strengthening of the verification and compliance provisions of the Biological Weapons Convention is one step towards this end.

Armenia welcomed the adoption of the Ottawa Convention on landmines, a significant step towards the complete eradication of these dangerous weapons. However, so far only one of our four neighbours has signed the Convention, while the other three do not seem ready to do so. This reality has left Armenia without options, impeding unilateral accession to the Convention, although we have no doubts that the ban on landmines must become universal. Armenia's full participation is contingent upon a similar level of political commitment by other States in the region to assume obligations under the Convention.

While taking into consideration its national security, Armenia is confident that the political and moral damage caused by mines exceeds their strategic importance, and so we do not rule out the possibility of cooperation for the regulation of the issue of anti-personnel landmines within the framework of the Ottawa Convention, prior to formal accession. In particular, Armenia would welcome the assistance of international organizations and individual States in training our experts, who would disseminate information among the population of mined areas. Such activities would help to significantly decrease the number of accidents among the civilian population.

Small arms and light weapons continue to inflict tragic loss of life or injury upon thousands of civilians in ethnic and religious conflicts, the overwhelming majority being women and children. In this respect, small arms are no less dangerous than large ones, and we must mobilize our efforts with regard to this issue. Being itself affected by a regional conflict, Armenia remains gravely concerned about this sad reality. Since the restoration of independence, the Government of Armenia has taken all possible steps to keep

the spread of small arms under control. Today the number of small arms in Armenia is in compliance with the country's legitimate security needs, and there are no additional stockpiles of small arms that could endanger internal stability. The Armenian Government is interested in a solution of the issue of small arms and has developed legislation which fully regulates that field.

In pursuing its national policies, Armenia has made it a priority to support international efforts to secure peace and stability throughout the world. We consider the Conference on Disarmament a central forum for negotiating global disarmament instruments. It is our belief that our full participation in the work of the Conference on Disarmament will allow us to make further contributions to the issues of arms control and disarmament. We hope members will support Armenia in its willingness to become a member of the Conference on Disarmament.

In conclusion, Armenia looks forward to actively participating in the work of the First Committee this year.

Mr. Hachani (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): Allow me first to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, and the other members of the Bureau on your election to head our Committee. We are convinced that your great experience and skill will greatly contribute to the success of our work. I would also like to convey sincere congratulations to your predecessor, Ambassador André Mernier, on the excellent way in which he conducted the business of the First Committee at the last session.

This new session of the Committee gives us another opportunity to assess the progress made in disarmament and what remains to be done to attain the goals that the international community has set itself in this area — particularly in regard to nuclear disarmament and the elimination of other weapons of mass destruction and the attainment of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. In carrying out this new assessment, we are focusing in particular on what has been contributed in the last year to the edifice we are building to consolidate the foundations of international security.

While the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel mines and the holding of the First Conference of States Parties, in Maputo, Mozambique were important, positive developments as in the past year, other developments have not been so positive. For example, there was no progress over the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and the START II Treaty has not entered into force either. Negotiations have not yet begun on START III or on a treaty banning fissile material for military purposes, and the sole forum responsible for negotiating disarmament treaties — the Conference on Disarmament — was unable to reach agreement on a programme of work for this year. These are facts which should encourage all the members of the Committee to redouble their efforts to revive the disarmament process to attain concrete, significant measures in this area.

Nuclear disarmament should continue to be a priority for the international community until the total elimination of nuclear arsenals, which still seriously jeopardize the security of the world, and a definitive ban on such weapons. The five nuclear Powers have specific obligations in this respect under article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The NPT Review Conference to be held in 2000 will be an opportunity for the 185 States parties to give the nuclear disarmament process the necessary impetus. If the Conference is to be considered a success, this opportunity must be seized. As we approach the twenty-first century, the international community has a historic opportunity to make substantial progress nuclear disarmament.

The START process is a meaningful contribution to nuclear disarmament, because it involves the two countries with the largest nuclear arsenals. We encourage the United States and the Russian Federation to proceed within this process to implement other measures, too. To this end, the entry into force of START II and the conclusion of START III are of particular importance.

However, we believe that an approach to nuclear disarmament in a multilateral framework is also necessary. The best framework for this is the Conference on Disarmament. The General Assembly, upon the recommendation of our Committee, has appealed to the international community to act accordingly. We hope that this will happen as soon as possible.

My country signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in 1996. We stress the importance for the Treaty of its ratification by the 44 States required. Tunisia encourages them to speed up the ratification process.

We thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the initiative of convening from 6 to 8 October 1999 in Vienna, a Conference of States parties to the CTBT to facilitate its entry into force.

The treaty on the prohibition of the production and stockpiling of fissile materials for military purposes would be, we feel, an important instrument which would strengthen nuclear non-proliferation and contribute to nuclear disarmament. Although the declaration of principles and objectives of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation made at the 1995 Review Conference of States Parties to the NPT intended such a treaty to be a second measure to be undertaken following the conclusion of the CTBT, it is not even being negotiated. My country considers that it should be expedited.

Pending the attainment of nuclear disarmament, the non-nuclear-weapon States are entitled to enjoy effective assurances against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against their security and integrity. These are the majority of States Members of the Organization, which have voluntarily renounced nuclear weapons.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and the strengthening of existing ones is an important way to promote non-proliferation at the regional and international levels. Accordingly, Tunisia, which is a State party to the NPT and a signatory of the treaty establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa, has constantly supported efforts to establish new zones. However, a regional commitment is needed to establish such zones. In the Middle East, this commitment continues to be blocked by Israel, which refuses to accede to the NPT, despite the many appeals by other States of the region, and by the General Assembly in its many resolutions on this issue adopted since 1974, and adopted by consensus since 1980.

I turn to the question of conventional weapons. Tunisia welcomes the entry into force of the Convention on the prohibition of anti-personnel mines. This was an important event that attested to the will of the international community to end the sufferings of civilian populations, who are always an easy target of such weapons, which strike indiscriminately in times both of war and peace.

Mindful of the importance of this Convention, and of its benefits for international peace and security, Tunisia was quick to ratify it. Our country's commitment to eliminate this category of destructive weapon was made clear by the destruction of our own stocks of anti-personnel mines at an official ceremony organized on 29 June 1999, at which a representative of the United Nations was present. We hope that all States parties will participate in this process so that the Convention's objectives can be attained.

As regards the illicit proliferation of, speculation in and trafficking in small arms and light weapons and the damage they can do, as well as threatening national and regional security, Tunisia supports the efforts of the regional and international organizations. My country stresses the importance of the measures adopted at the recent summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), reflecting the will and determination of the African countries in tackling this scourge.

Tunisia also welcomes the adoption of the Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa by the member States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on 31 October 1998. My country encourages all efforts to limit or halt the trade in these weapons, and we hope that the international community and the United Nations will support this regional initiative so that it can be expanded to include other countries, thus contributing to its success.

We recall the General Assembly's decision, in resolution 53/77 E, of 4 December 1998, to convene an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects no later than 2001. We need to work together to ensure that the work of this conference is successful. My country hopes to see decisive, coordinated action by the international community in this area, under the aegis of the United Nations.

Tunisia attaches high priority to strengthening security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region and will spare no effort to consolidate, together with our Maghreb and European partners, peace and stability in order to promote development and prosperity in this region. Tunisia is resolved to play an active role in the region. We are working for a comprehensive multi-dimensional and concerted approach from both sides of the Mediterranean basin, promoting dialogue and cooperation. This approach will help to strengthen our partnership in the region in the face of challenges such as from terrorism in all of its forms and manifestations, international crime and the production and consumption of drugs and illicit trafficking.

We hope that the new millennium will enable us to make progress towards promoting peace and security in a world free from arsenals. My country will continue to play its part for disarmament. My delegation is ready to cooperate with you, Mr. Chairman, and the other members of the Committee so that our work is successful.

Before concluding, I would like to thank the Secretary-General and the Department for Disarmament Affairs, headed by Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for their efforts they have making to advance work in the various disarmament bodies, including the work of this Committee.

Mr. Luck (Australia): Allow me first, Sir, to extend to you my warmest congratulations on your election to the high office of Chairman of this Committee and wish you every success in the discharge of your responsibilities. You may be assured of my full cooperation and support in your endeavours. My congratulations also go to the other members of the Bureau who assist you in your important tasks.

I am taking the floor in my capacity as President of the Conference on Disarmament to present its report (A/54/27) on its work during the 1999 session.

As can be seen from the report, the 1999 session of the Conference on Disarmament was not a productive one, if measured in terms of progress made in tackling items on its agenda, although the Conference did give serious and substantive consideration to important questions of security and disarmament. Despite the concerted efforts of successive Presidents throughout the session, consensus on a comprehensive and balanced programme of work proved elusive, and therefore the Conference did not re-establish or establish any mechanism on its specific agenda items during the 1999 session. This was a disappointing outcome.

In the course of intensive consultations on the programme of work, however, a number of proposals were put forward by delegations and groups of delegations, as well as by successive Presidents of the Conference. The proposals contained several common elements relating to items of the Conference's work. These included the re-establishment of two Ad Hoc Committees.

One Ad Hoc Committee would negotiate effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. The second would, under item 1 of the Conference's agenda entitled, "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament", negotiate, on the basis of the report (CD/1299) of the Special Coordinator and the mandate contained therein, a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other explosive devices.

There was also common ground on the reappointment of Special Coordinators on the issues of anti-personnel landmines, transparency in armaments, the review of the agenda of the Conference, the expansion of its membership and its improved and effective functioning.

Despite broad agreement on these aspects of a programme of work, differences among Member States on how to deal with the two issues of nuclear disarmament and prevention of an arms race in outer space ultimately, and regrettably, prevented agreement on a comprehensive programme of work by the time of the last session for 1999. Proposals on these two outstanding issues were drawn up, and offered as a basis for possible agreement, by Ambassador Dembri of Algeria in his capacity as President of the Conference in May and June. It was broadly felt that this work by Ambassador Dembri had brought the Conference closer to agreement on a Programme of Work, although it became clear that further consultations would be required in order to try and bridge the differences on these two important subjects.

During the course of my consultations during the Conference on Disarmament session, it was evident to me that there existed a strong collective interest among Member States in commencing substantive work as soon as possible during the 2000 session of the Conference on Disarmament. This conclusion is reflected in the presidential statement contained in paragraph 38 of the annual report. I therefore intend, in accordance with that report, to conduct jointly with my successor as President, Ambassador Harald Kreid of Austria, consultations during the inter-sessional months in order to try to achieve this goal.

Although the Conference did not undertake any substantive negotiations this year, it is my belief that it continued to serve as a vital and unique forum for an exchange of views on evolving positions on, and attitudes to, arms control and disarmament. An exchange of views on key issues, such as the Conference witnessed this year, may be seen as a necessary step in defining new priorities and forging the requisite consensus to launch negotiations.

On a positive note, in an important development on 5 August 1999, the Conference decided to admit five new members — Ecuador, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Malaysia and Tunisia — bringing its membership to 66 States. The adoption of the decision represented the implementation of the recommendation made in 1998 by the then Special Coordinator on Expansion, Ambassador Erwin Hofer of Switzerland. This decision, together with the fact that 42

countries participated as observers in the work of the Conference, testifies to the continued relevance of the Conference as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum.

The Conference on Disarmament is a robust institution, with an impressive track record in negotiating important arms control and disarmament treaties. After what has been a challenging year for disarmament and arms control, I believe there is an even stronger argument for its taking a lead in reaffirming the capacity of the multilateral system to address our respective security and disarmament objectives. I would urge all members of the Conference to work assiduously — and demonstrate the necessary flexibility and spirit of compromise — to that end and to the benefit of everyone.

It only remains for me to express my sincere gratitude to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr Vladimir Petrovsky, the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr Abdelkader Bensmail, and their small team of dedicated staff, for their continued valuable support and assistance to the Conference.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I remind the Committee that all speakers deserve to be heard with respect, and I therefore urge members to pursue their important negotiations outside the room, or before or after the meeting.

Mr. Botnaru (Republic of Moldova): Allow me at the outset, Mr. Chairman, to join previous speakers in congratulating you and the other members of the Bureau on your election to conduct the proceedings of the First Committee during this session of the General Assembly. We are confident that under your skilful leadership our deliberations will be successful. I also wish to express our gratitude to the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Jaynatha Dhanapala, for his comprehensive introductory statement.

The Secretary-General emphasized in his recent report on the work of the Organization:

> "The systematic and progressive reduction of nuclear weapons, with the ultimate goal of their complete elimination, will remain one of the priority tasks of the international community." (*A/54/1, para. 119*)

My delegation, like many others, fully agrees with this assertion. There is no question but that we must pursue nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The principles and objectives set out in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) process must be honoured. A priority task of the international community will be to successfully carry out the forthcoming Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, to be held in the year 2000.

From this perspective, the Republic of Moldova calls for overcoming the stagnation in negotiations on the relevant treaties supporting nuclear non-proliferation, and for developing more constructive attitudes within the Conference on Disarmament. This will create, in our opinion, favourable premises for a more active disarmament process, which should lead to the adoption of implementable and verifiable nuclear disarmament measures in the future.

Further progress towards entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and of START II, as well as the beginning of productive negotiations aimed at elaborating a treaty to ban further production of fissile materials are also, in our view, essential elements to this end. In this context, the Republic of Moldova welcomes the statement of 20 June 1999 of the Presidents of the Russian Federation and the United States, in which both States agreed to begin discussions on START III.

The Republic of Moldova is deeply concerned that, three years after its adoption, the CTBT has not yet borne fruit, and its spirit and objectives have been challenged by the nuclear testing conducted by some States. We hope that the recent Vienna Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT will not be recalled later as a futile multilateral exercise and will really help to accelerate the ratification process.

In May 1995, at the Review and Extension Conference in New York, the parties to the NPT agreed in the decision on principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament to seek the immediate commencement and early conclusion of cut-off negotiations. However, despite the widespread international support for a fissile material cut-off treaty, formal negotiations on cut-off have not yet begun in the Conference on Disarmament. The Republic of Moldova expects the member States of the Disarmament Conference to redouble their efforts to relaunch the negotiations on the cut-off treaty before the beginning of the next session.

Still in the context of non-proliferation, we welcome and support the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in different regions of the world, recognizing them as

important complementary instruments to the NPT. These zones can undoubtedly significantly facilitate the attainment of the overall goal of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. In this connection, I commend the important work achieved by the Disarmament Commission at its 1999 substantive session, at which consensus was reached on, *inter alia*, principles for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among States of the region concerned.

With respect to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which has now been in force for some 26 months, we are pleased to note that, in fulfilment of their obligations, numerous States parties have already submitted their declarations of facilities involved in both chemical weapons and civilian chemical activities, and have opened them to inspection. These are important steps to implement, in cooperation with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the verification regime established by the Convention. However, the objectives will be difficult to achieve without the adherence to the Convention of all those States with the capacity to produce such weapons.

While emphasising the imperative need to ensure universal adherence to all agreements related to eliminating weapons of mass destruction, we must also take into account the concerns expressed by a number of States about the financial aspects of ratification. We should recognise that full implementation of all these treaties and conventions is costly and can be a heavy burden for some developing countries, as well as for newly independent States confronted with difficult financial problems. So as not to discourage ratification by such States which are politically ready, and so as not to endanger the implementation process, appropriate approaches to these specific concerns must be analysed.

Regarding conventional arms, the Republic of Moldova supports all measures which contribute to greater transparency and confidence-building between States. Increased transparency can reduce inter-State suspicions, improve early warning and deter selfish or irresponsible actions. From this perspective, my country will take the appropriate steps to provide timely data regularly on the import and export of conventional arms covered by the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. We also underline the importance of an expansion of the Register's procedures to cover additional types of weapons.

The approval in 1998 by the European Union of an evolving Code of Conduct that would provide for an annual comparison and update of partners' policies in the crucial area of arms exports was a positive step. We think that this commendable initiative should inspire all of us and encourage, in particular, arms-exporting countries to act in a similar way.

Most arms control efforts focus on weapons of mass destruction and heavy conventional weapons, but small arms and light weapons designed for military use, as well as landmines, are responsible for the death of and injury to thousands of innocent people, including women and children, in armed conflicts throughout the world. We share the view that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons is one of many symptoms of increased intra-State conflicts since the end of the cold war. The excessive accumulation and illicit transfer of small arms and light weapons has exacerbated internal conflicts, complicated peace building and undermined peace agreements in many countries, including my own.

In numerous countries, especially those affected by separatist movements, stocks are stolen for use by paramilitaries or sold off along with illegally produced armaments in other zones of conflict. This phenomenon is characteristic of the Transdniestrian region of the Republic of Moldova, controlled by a separatist regime. This zone is over-militarized. In recent years, there has been recorded in this region illegal production of different types of armaments, including small arms, light weapons and anti-personnel landmines. Through some third countries, these types of armaments have reached other conflict zones, supporting terrorist and criminal groups, as well as secessionist movements.

At the same time, there are stockpiled in the region huge quantities of armaments, including both accounted-for and unaccounted-for Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty)-limited equipment, belonging to the foreign troops still stationed there. Cases have also been recorded of armaments "leaking" from those stocks to separatist illegal organizations. Therefore, it is very important to take measures aimed at destroying non-transportable weapons and withdrawing the foreign military arsenal and troops from the territory of the Republic of Moldova. In this context, I would like to express our gratitude for the financial assistance provided by a number of States, including the United States, for the purpose of eliminating or withdrawing the armaments and ammunition I have mentioned. That is why my country is keenly interested in promoting the destruction of excess stocks of weapons and curbing illegal arms transfers, especially in areas of conflict and post-conflict. The dimensions of the

threat posed by small arms require us to act globally. A proposal for an international conference on the illicit trade in all its aspects is before us at this session. We should agree to convene this Conference and give it a broad and comprehensive agenda.

My Government fully shares the aspiration to ban anti-personnel landmines, and welcomes the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention as well as the outcome of the First Meeting of the States Parties, held in Maputo. We will support all efforts towards achieving universal applicability of this Convention. Full participation of and compliance by all States, including big ones, remains, after all, an essential precondition for the effectiveness of every disarmament regime.

For the Republic of Moldova, the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe is one of the cornerstones of security and stability. Since its inception, CFE has become both a process and venue for continuous dialogue on the security concerns of its participants. With the purpose of ensuring the Treaty's long-term effectiveness by adapting it to the new security realities in Europe, the States parties have in recent years engaged in a negotiation process.

On 30 March 1999, in a special decision, the CFE Joint Consultative Group agreed on solutions to some of the toughest adaptation problems. Among agreed elements, the Republic of Moldova attaches great importance to a point that reinforces the right of States parties to decide whether to permit foreign military forces on their territory, through the workings of the Treaty's new structure of limits and flexibility. Some questions are still open. We believe that the interests of all countries involved in the negotiations have to be taken into consideration in the process of adaptation in order to enable them to sign the amended Treaty. We hope that States parties will reach consensus on remaining issues, thus ensuring that an amended CFE Treaty will be signed at the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE) summit in Istanbul.

In conclusion, I would like to extend our warmest congratulations to Ecuador, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Malaysia and Tunisia on their admission to the Conference on Disarmament. We hope that similar decisions will be taken by the Conference on Disarmament in the future, thus allowing other candidate countries to make further contributions on the issues of arms control and disarmament.

Mr. Oussoupov (Kyrgyzstan): Allow me to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of this Committee, which is crucial to the cooperative efforts of States seeking to build a more secure and peaceful world. My delegation offers its full support to you during the work of the fifty-fourth session. I would also like to thank your predecessor for the excellent work he did last year.

The events of the past year have highlighted the importance of the work of this Committee. Despite our best efforts, we have witnessed unfortunate setbacks in the process of multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation. In this light, as we take stock of what the global nuclear non-proliferation regime has accomplished, we must regretfully admit that the initially high expectations that followed the 1995 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review and Extension Conference remain at best only partially fulfilled. Completion in 1996 of the negotiation of a Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) represents the most striking progress that has been made on the disarmament front. But the rejection by the United States Senate of the CTBT has raised serious doubts about tne future entry into force of this important non-proliferation and disarmament agreement.

My delegation is also concerned about the implications of the accelerated development of ballistic missile defences in some countries, which could trigger a new round of the arms race. We also note, with regret, that the nuclear-disarmament process has remained stalled during 1999, with the START II agreement not yet in force. My delegation would like again to urge the speedy ratification of START II and the rapid conclusion of the START III agreement.

The multiple challenges to the international non-proliferation regime raise the stakes for the fifth NPT Review Conference, scheduled for the year 2000. The outcome, however, is far from certain. My delegation welcomes the adoption of a final document by the Preparatory Committee at its 1999 session, but regrets that the document did not reflect any progress on substantive issues.

Unfortunately, world security is not threatened only by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The harmful effects of armed conflicts — including international terrorism, drug-smuggling and illicit trafficking in small arms — are not confined within national borders. Indeed, they have already spilled over into the southern region of my country. Militant religious extremists, with experience

of participation in the civil strife in Afghanistan and Tajikistan, have tried to impose their views by violence and hostage-taking, to encroach upon the security of Central Asia and the sovereignty of the States of the region. In close cooperation with Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Russia, Kyrgyzstan has taken necessary measures to stop these attempts. Due to these efforts, the last groups of militants left the territory of the Kyrgyz Republic yesterday.

The Kyrgyz Republic reiterates its condemnation of international terrorism, and calls for additional steps at this session to promote international cooperation in the struggle against it. In this context, Kyrgyzstan values greatly the support and solidarity of the States members of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia, expressed to the Government of Kyrgyzstan at their ministerial meeting in Almaty on 14 September 1999.

It is also necessary to specifically point out interaction and cooperation within the framework of the "Shanghai Five": Kazakhstan, China, Russia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. We consider the meeting of the heads of the States members of the "Shanghai Five", held in the capital of Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, in August 1999, to be a positive step that contributed significantly to the strengthening of common regional and global security.

Owing to those events, which took place in the southern part of my country, my delegation notes with approval the steps taken by this body to restrain illicit trafficking in small arms. It pledges its support during the coming session for further measures aimed at controlling this dangerous threat to international security.

Kyrgyzstan continues to participate actively in the efforts to create a Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone. Recent developments have underlined the importance of regional approaches to disarmament and non-proliferation, by which members of the international community can strengthen the global non-proliferation regime at a time when it faces serious challenges to its effectiveness and integrity.

The Kyrgyz Republic would like to call particular attention to the continued work, under United Nations auspices, of a working group on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. The meeting of this group in Bishkek in July 1998 marked an important stage in the implementation of the initiative, and resulted in preparing the legal groundwork for the future treaty. At its most recent session, held in Sapporo, Japan, this October, the working group made significant progress in drafting the text of the Treaty. It is our sincere hope that the work on finalizing the text will be completed in the near future. In this regard, I would like to point out that the Government of Kyrgyzstan has already offered to hold the signing of the future treaty at the shore of the Issyk-Kul lake, situated in the picturesque beauty of the Kyrgyz mountains.

My delegation expresses its appreciation to Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, the Department for Disarmament Affairs and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific for their support and assistance, which have been generously provided in promoting this initiative. Let me also take this opportunity to commend the Regional Centre for its achievements in raising awareness of security and disarmament issues in the region, and express support for the multifaceted activities of the Centre.

We welcome the continued assistance of interested international organizations and States as we continue to move forward with this process. My delegation also calls upon the States of other regions to engage in similar initiatives towards regional confidence-building and eventual global nuclear disarmament.

The Kyrgyz Republic firmly believes that in the new millennium economic development, not military spending, should be the true measure of national achievement. The need for such a shift in countries like my own, where economic and social difficulties of the transition pose serious obstacles to national development, is obvious. For this reason, we recognize the increased importance of the First Committee and its role in our efforts to create a new international environment conducive to peace and prosperity. My delegation pledges its full support to ensure that constructive steps result from our deliberations.

Ms. Aguiar (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, Sir, I would like to congratulate you on your election to the Chair of this important Committee. I wish you and the other members of the Bureau every success, and I assure you that you can rely on the cooperation and support of my delegation.

The end of the cold war brought a change in the traditional approach to the concept of security and disarmament. The international panorama has been changing in the 1990s. The basis upon which security policies were established no longer accords with today's reality.

With a world population that has reached 6 billion, the greatest challenges to the security of many nations include non-military risks. There are many elements that may challenge the security of a State and its citizens: international terrorism, drug-trafficking, transnational criminal activity, diminished civilian security, arms trafficking and the illicit exploitation of natural resources, among others. These are the new potential threats to peace and stability. In addition, the Caribbean States and other island States face natural phenomena that can also threaten their survival.

Each region's characteristics define its perceptions of what constitutes a threat to its security. That is why external factors that seriously threaten some can be quite insignificant to others. Therefore, my delegation believes that non-military concerns and threats confronting many countries deserve a different approach from that contained in traditional security doctrines.

Among the challenges we face today is that of limiting the tremendously negative impact of the production and distribution of weapons of all kinds. But we must also recognize that they would not be used if conditions of tension and distrust, arising from extreme poverty, did not prevail.

In the context of the Caribbean, there is no doubt that there are concrete reasons for our island States to feel more vulnerable than others — factors such as drug trafficking, transnational criminality, arms trading, natural disasters and environmental change. The economy of many Caribbean countries, small in area, depends to a considerable extent on foreign trade and tourism. In many cases, the economy is based on the production of one or two basic commodities, on which the majority of the labour force depend. Any change in the price of an export product or the suspension of a tariff concession can produce a considerable economic imbalance.

The same can be said, in terms of their disastrous effects, of the endless repayment of foreign indebtedness, the arrival of a hurricane, the eruption of a volcano, or the occurrence of a tidal wave. Although it may sound somewhat unorthodox to talk about economic topics and natural disasters in the First Committee, this is undoubtedly a sign of the new times. How can we deny a country, or a group of countries, their legitimate right to consider as a threat to their national security the occurrence of such situations, whether man-made or natural, threatening the survival in suitable conditions of its people?

The delegation of the Dominican Republic understands that for these nations such threats are critical to their existence as independent States. Therefore, we believe that it is essential to create the conditions for a debate on the definition of new international security paradigms. We would like to make it quite clear that we are not ignoring the goals periodically stated in this forum: a world free of nuclear weapons, whether or not intended for deterrence; the expansion of zones free of nuclear weapons and nuclear tests; effective prohibition of the production, stockpiling and/or use of chemical or bacteriological weapons; effective control of the traffic in the very dangerous light weapons; the disappearance of anti-personnel mines.

Many small island States depend mainly on agriculture, fishing and tourism for their livelihood, and therefore rely on their fragile ecosystems. This is why we are very concerned about the transport of nuclear wastes in the Caribbean Sea, which can pose a tremendous threat to our fragile ecosystems and therefore to the security of island States. As the representative of Chile has already pointed out, we must strengthen control mechanisms to protect us from unexpected events related to shipping. This is all the more urgent since those of us who suffer tend to be from small countries, which lack the resources to cope with crises created by third parties and by technologies beyond our control.

The illegal traffic in drugs and arms, linked with the chain of criminality that it produces, not only corrupts society and weakens democratic values and the sense of solidarity in society, but is also a tremendous obstacle to tourism, which is one of the most prosperous industries in the Caribbean. We are therefore pleased and encouraged that there has been progress on this issue at the regional level, through the Hemispheric Security Committee of the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission, in coordination with national Governments, to encourage support programmes in the following areas; communication with national drug enforcement agencies; strengthening national drug enforcement commissions; the design of a documentation system for the control of commercial shipments of firearms; and the training of specialized personnel to treat drug abusers.

Although three decades have passed since the end of negotiations on the text of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, we have noted over the years that the human and political characteristic which has kept the Tlateloco Treaty in force in our region is the great capacity of our Governments to

adapt it to new conditions. The amendments to some of its main articles, as well as the additional protocols, are clear examples. This capacity to review what has been negotiated, to yield when necessary and update agreements in the search for a common objective has made it possible for 32 of the 33 signatories to ratify the Treaty.

The delegation of the Dominican Republic refers to these qualities of perseverance, creativity and adaptability because we believe that today, as was the case 30 years ago, they are indispensable for the successful conclusion of efforts to take advantage of the new international environment created by the end of the cold war, and to capitalize on the fruits of the Treaty of Tlalelolco to create different regional spaces free of nuclear weapons — an objective that has been strengthened by the guidelines recently adopted by the Disarmament Commission.

It was in 1991 that the Central American countries first expressed their desire that the regional and international organizations should support them in deactivating and destroying the landmines buried during the years of conflict that the region had suffered. With their help, the Central American countries have set goals to be free of these mines as soon as possible.

In this regard, we can proudly say that the region has gone further than others in the long process of freeing itself of these weapons of war. We are also happy to confirm that 33 States of our region have signed the Ottawa Convention, and that of the 58 countries that have ratified it so far 14 are from the Latin American and Caribbean area. We urge all the countries of the international community to accede to this important international juridical instrument, since we regard it as essential and far-reaching, with a particularly humanitarian dimension.

As regards transparency in the procurement of conventional weapons, it is right to recognize the role the United Nations has played through the creation of the arms Register. We still hope, even though the Register is entirely voluntary and is produced on a yearly basis, that it may in the future become a binding international instrument, as is the case in our region with the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions.

As has been recognized, peace is not merely the absence of war. It is also interdependence and cooperation to promote economic and social development, control and limit armaments, promote human rights, strengthen democratic institutions, protect the environment and improve the quality of life of all, through a more equitable distribution of the wealth that we derive from nature and our own intelligence. All these elements are indispensable for the establishment of democratic, peaceful and safer societies.

Mr. Castellón Duarte (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): As I am speaking for the first time, Sir, allow me to congratulate you on your well-deserved election. I wish to offer you my delegation's support in discharging your important mandate. I would also like to extend my congratulations to the other members of the Bureau. My delegation also wishes to commend the Secretariat on the quality of the various reports it has provided on different aspects of the topic we are discussing. The wealth of substance that they contain will make the Committee's work easier.

Nicaragua is one of the signatories of the Treaty of Tlalelolco, which guarantees the denuclearization, for other than peaceful purposes, of the Latin American States. On the basis our anti-nuclear position, we are concerned that the Conference on Disarmament, despite its successes, has not been able to achieve all of its objectives.

Although the cold war now belongs to history, the world is still insecure, and nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction continue to proliferate. The nuclear-weapon States are very slow to dismantle their installations, despite the reduction in international tensions. The lack of unanimity in ratifying the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and the weakening of the Conventions controlling other weapons of mass destruction have increased global insecurity. Nuclear weapons, although indisputably a source of great power, do not increase the security or protection of any country. The foundation of international peace and security is the implementation of treaties banning such weapons.

Nicaragua shares the goals of the United Nations in its efforts to bring about general disarmament. We are in favour of adopting binding measures to provide guarantees to non-nuclear-weapon States, so that they will not be subject to the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. We support initiatives to establish international mechanisms for a phased reduction of nuclear weapons, with a view to their speedy and complete elimination, which should be humanity's prime objective during the coming millennium.

We also share the opinion of the International Court of Justice that States must hold negotiations in good faith to bring about nuclear disarmament, in all its aspects, under strict and effective controls. We support the establishment

of nuclear-weapon-free zones in all regions of the world. One day we will live on a planet free of nuclear weapons. My Government considers that the recommendations of the Tokyo Forum were very positive.

In addition to the nuclear danger, the constant trafficking in other types of weapons is also a threat to the internal and external security of States. The threat may be smaller, but it has acquired new dimensions and become more urgent since the end of the cold war. In many regions of the world small arms are killing more people and causing more suffering than any other weapons. Their use has become a characteristic feature of domestic conflicts in recent decades.

Excessive numbers of these weapons remain in the hands of ex-combatants and are in danger of falling into criminal hands. These small arms have features that make them ideal for internal conflicts and action by terrorist groups, rebel groups and irregular troops. They are deadly, easy to carry and hide, and can be used without significant training. The trafficking in and circulation of these weapons is not only a source of insecurity, but hinders the socio-economic development of the affected countries, especially developing countries.

Since the problem of the small arms trade arises particularly in developing countries, my Government supports the work being done by the Group of Experts appointed by the Secretary-General to study the problem of small arms and make recommendations. We also support convening a conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects no later than 2001, in the hope that it may find a global solution to this problem. However, the regional or international measures that we may adopt will not be truly effective unless States introduce effective domestic controls on the production, sale and transfer of such weapons. Internal and international security require of every State the political will to do so.

At the end of the decade-long civil war in Nicaragua, a tremendous amount of small arms remained in the hands of ex-combatants on both sides. This has caused much apprehension in parts of the country, because of the great increase in violence and criminality. With the help of the United Nations, the Organization of American States, and non-governmental organizations, we have organized several economic development programmes and projects to end the problem, by reintegrating most of the ex-combatants into civilian life.

The Nicaraguan experience, as well as that of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Colombia, was examined in a workshop on the decommissioning of weapons and the integration of ex-combatants into civil society, organized by the United Nations in Guatemala City from 18 to 20 November 1998. The purpose of the workshop was to ensure that these countries' experience in the field not be lost, and that it assist the Secretary-General in his response to the needs of other States encountering similar situations and requiring help in the decommissioning of weapons and in the demobilization and reintegration of former combatants.

My Government is well aware of the suffering and death caused by the irresponsible and indiscriminate use of anti-personnel mines, because many of our citizens, farmers, women and children, have been killed or disabled by landmine explosions on our territory. Therefore, we welcome the entry into force on 1 March of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, by which Member States are committed to destroy all anti-personnel mines under their jurisdiction or control within four years.

The First Meeting of the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention, held in Maputo, Mozambique from 3 to 7 May, learned that Nicaragua had been the first of the signatories to create a national demining commission and to implement a national plan to eliminate such weapons. The Nicaraguan army in April 1999 began a programme to destroy the mines in its warehouses, with the elimination of the first 5,000 devices. This is part of the national demining programme, by which mine clearance units are removing the mines buried in our national territory during the armed conflict of the 1980s.

My country, in support of the world movement for disarmament, has cut back its army from its 100,000 at the beginning of the 1990s to about 14,000 today. As a result, there has been a substantial reduction in the military budget, to the benefit of social development projects. This reduced army is now doing civic work to help our most disadvantaged elements. I would like to take this opportunity the most disadvantaged elements. I would like to take this opportunity to commend the Nicaraguan army for its praiseworthy recovery and reconstruction efforts to repair the tremendous damage done to our country's infrastructure by hurricane Mitch exactly a year ago.

Mr. Jokonya (Zimbabwe): My delegation would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to preside over the the deliberations of this important Committee. I am confident that under your wise leadership extensive progress will be registered. In this regard, let me assure you of my delegation's fullest support.

As the twentieth century comes to an end, it is not the intention of this delegation to erect a monument to our failures. But I must hasten to add that the disarmament landscape at this session, the last of this century, casts an ominous shadow on the approaching millennium. Recent events that cause grave concern include the failure of the Conference on Disarmament to agree on a programme of work; the failure of the Disarmament Commission to reach consensus on the agenda for the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, after the nuclear-weapon States objected to the prioritizing of nuclear disarmament, which had been agreed in 1978; the failure by the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference to agree on recommendations to that Conference; and the unveiling at the fiftieth anniversary North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Alliance summit, in April 1999, of a new Alliance strategic concept that in our view is in large part a repetition of NATO's cold-war strategic doctrine. This has provided a disincentive to the Russian Duma to ratify START II.

Despite these adverse developments, which have dominated the disarmament agenda in recent months, Zimbabwe's commitment to the goal of general and complete disarmament remains unshaken. As testimony to its resolve to relentlessly pursue the agenda for the elimination of nuclear weapons, Zimbabwe acceded to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), on Wednesday, 13 October 1999. That was preceded by Zimbabwe's acceptance, on 17 February 1999, of seismic equipment from the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban-Treaty Organization. Zimbabwe agreed to the international monitoring system's installing an auxiliary seismic station, AS120, on its territory.

We are aware that the achievement of the CTBT has remained a central tenet of the NPT, as spelled out in that Treaty's preamble and reaffirmed in the principles and objectives decision, a document that comes under the indefinite extension of the NPT.

Nuclear testing and nuclear disarmament are interrelated and inseparable issues. Thus the non-existence of nuclear testing cannot be an end in itself; rather, it is a step towards nuclear disarmament. Some nuclear-weapon States recognize this relationship. Here I wish to quote from the statement of Mr. Li Changhe, the Ambassador for disarmament of the People's Republic of China, to the Committee on 14 October 1998. Referring to this issue, he said:

> "The complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons is the common aspiration of mankind. We fully understand the wish of the large number of non-nuclear-weapon States for general and complete nuclear disarmament and their concern over the slow pace of this process. The indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons does not imply that the nuclear-weapon States can possess nuclear weapons for ever. The nuclear-weapon States should intensify their efforts to fulfil their obligations set forth in article VI of the NPT" (*A/C.1/53/PV.5, p.11*)

Zimbabwe, as a State party to the NPT, is opposed to nuclear testing, whether for the acquisition of nuclear weapons or for their qualitative improvement. In this regard, we agree with the Canberra Commission, which stated:

> "Nuclear weapons are held by a handful of states which insist that these weapons provide unique security benefits, and yet reserve uniquely to themselves the right to own them. This situation is highly discriminatory and thus unstable; it cannot be sustained. The possession of nuclear weapons by any state is a constant stimulus to other states to acquire them."

It is the considered view of my delegation that the continued existence of a nuclear club of States bent on preserving their nuclear monopoly, while pontificating to the rest of the world that it should not acquire the same weaponry, is unacceptable. As long as the exclusivity of the nuclear club is maintained, there will always be an irresistible temptation for threshold nuclear Powers to knock at the door and gain entry.

Indeed, Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala gave a warning in 1995 at the Review and Extension Conference, and his warning will continue to haunt us into the new millennium. It is necessary at this stage to remind ourselves of his statement:

> "There is a united cynicism on the part of the nuclear-weapon States and a total disregard of nuclear disarmament commitments. We might see not just one or two countries, for individual reasons, wanting to opt out, and a major threat of an exodus from the Treaty. We must never let the Treaty be jeopardized. And for that, there has to be progress in nuclear disarmament."

In line with my delegation's unequivocal commitment to the maintenance of the non-proliferation regime, Zimbabwe will vote in favour of all draft resolutions that further the goal of global nuclear disarmament.

Although the proliferation of small arms and light weapons was a peripheral issue on the international security agenda a few years ago, my delegation is happy that the problem of proliferation of and illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons has assumed a visible profile on the international arms control agenda. In our part of the world, it is not possible to delink problems related to unauthorized weapons possession, the illicit circulation of arms speculation, criminality and intra-State armed conflict from drug trafficking, car smuggling and money laundering. Endeavours to strengthen our interdependence in southern Africa through the removal of impediments to the free movement of people and goods have been taken advantage of by transnational arms merchants who exploit the porosity of our borders to provide non-State actors with arms.

Realizing that cooperation is better than competition in addressing regional security problems, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Inter-State Defence and Security Committee established at its nineteenth session, held in Lusaka in November 1997, an Ad Hoc Committee under the chairmanship of Zimbabwe. The Committee, initially comprised of Angola, Malawi, Zambia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe, was charged with recommending ways and means to close loopholes in SADC States' border control mechanisms, in order to control the growing illicit trade in small arms. The Ad Hoc Committee encouraged the establishment of national, interdepartmental task forces that would submit reports to the regional information centre located in Harare. The regional information centre would, in turn, compile monthly status reports for onward transmission to national information centres.

Our experience in southern Africa is that the sharing of both tactical and strategic information is vital in combating the small arms menace. Through this information exchange, civil aviation authorities have been able to place our regional airspace under effective surveillance. A number of planes used to proliferate weapons in the subregion have been identified, and in some cases this has led to the arrest and prosecution of the prominent arms runners.

Responsibility in arms transfer policies is critical in addressing the small arms problem. We welcome the Code of Conduct on arms exports approved by the European Union in June 1998, which set high standards for the management of and restraint in conventional arms transfers by European Union member States. It is the submission of my delegation that Africa's arms exporters should also adopt ethical arms selling policies, in order to enhance transparency in arms transfers. In this regard, my delegation will endeavour to lend weight and meaning to the draft resolution on small arms, by requesting the sponsors to draft a paragraph calling upon arms suppliers to adhere to a strict code of conduct.

Zimbabwe welcomes the decision to convene an international conference on the illicit trade in small arms in all its aspects no later than 2001, as envisaged by resolution 53/77 E. I pledge my delegation's support for this conference. Against the background that my subregion is awash with small arms, a legacy of the conflicts of yesteryear, Zimbabwe will actively participate in the preparatory committee to be established during this current session.

A significant number of landmines were laid in Zimbabwe during the liberation struggle, which ended in 1980. The war's legacy is a minefield stretching across 700 kilometres of the Zambian and Mozambique borders. The exact number of landmines is unknown; estimates vary from 1 million to 3 million. These mines continue to kill and maim civilians and animals alike. My delegation welcomes the entry into force on 1 March 1999 of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, and the First Meeting of States Parties to the Convention, held in Maputo. My country remains committed to the total ban on anti-personnel mines. It is my delegation's wish to recognize the European Community's support for demining, assistance to victims and other landmine-related activities. Zimbabwe also acknowledges the central and coordinating role of the United Nations Mine Action Service.

In conclusion, the delegation of Zimbabwe the First Committee to transform disarmament's challenges into possibilities. To this end, both nuclear-weapon States and

non-nuclear-weapon States are encouraged to exercise flexibility in order to overcome the impasse on nuclear and other disarmament issues.

Mr. De Saram (Sri Lanka): It gives me great pleasure as I take the floor to extend to you, Sir, the warmest congratulations on your appointment to the high office of Chairman of the First Committee.

I have the honour, as Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean, to introduce the Committee's report (A/54/29) under agenda item 69, "Implementation of the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace".

The Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace was adopted by the General Assembly in 1971. The Committee last reported to the General Assembly in 1997, two years ago, at the fifty-second session. The Committee in its 1997 report recorded that it had not found it possible to reach consensus on the manner of the implementation of the Declaration.

The General Assembly in 1997 took note of the Committee's report. The Assembly expressed the conviction that the participation of all the permanent members of the Security Council, and of the major maritime users of the Indian Ocean, in the work of the Committee was important. The Assembly requested that consultations continue with the members of the Committee, with the permanent members of the Security Council, and with the major maritime users of the Indian Ocean, with a view to resolving the difficulties encountered on the question of the Declaration's implementation. The Assembly requested that the Chairman should, through the Ad Hoc Committee, report to it at its fifty-fourth session in 1999, this year.

Thus I have the honour today to introduce in the First Committee the 1999 report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean. The report is short. It records in paragraph 10 the statement I made to the Committee, following the consultations that I had had, pursuant to resolution 52/44 of 1997, with the members of the Committee, the permanent members of the Security Council and the major maritime users of the Indian Ocean on the question of the implementation of the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace.

There are a number of difficulties over implementation of the objectives of the Declaration. Yet, however difficult implementation of its objectives may be, I believe, as Chairman of the Committee, as the report of the Committee notes, that the objectives of the Declaration should continue to be preserved by the General Assembly, as an ideal towards which all concerned with the Indian Ocean, and with the Indian Ocean region, should, through participation in the Ad Hoc Committee, continue to strive; towards those goals of peace, security and stability in the Indian Ocean, and in the Indian Ocean region, that all members of the Committee, and indeed, all members of the United Nations, I am sure share.

Thus I would hope that the First Committee will find it possible to propose to the General Assembly, as it did two years ago in 1997, that the General Assembly maintain the item "Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace" on its agenda; that the General Assembly request that the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean should continue its endeavours to arrive at an appropriate consensus; and that a report should be submitted on its endeavours to the General Assembly at the fifty-sixth session, in 2001.

An appropriate draft resolution along those lines will be submitted to the secretariat very shortly.

Mr. Mwakawago (United Republic of Tanzania): Let me take this opportunity, Mr. Chairman, to add my voice and that of my delegation to the congratulations extended to you and the other members of your Bureau on your election to preside over the deliberations of this important Committee. We are confident that with your outstanding skills and experience you will guide this Committee to success. In discharging your duties you can count on the full support and cooperation of my delegation.

The United Nations Charter accords the highest priority to the maintenance of international peace and security. As a prerequisite for the attainment of international peace and security, general and complete disarmament must therefore be placed at the forefront of the endeavours of the United Nations. In the view of my delegation, nuclear disarmament remains the highest priority.

In the past year the process of disarmament has been disappointing. There have been more setbacks than achievements. More than ever before, nuclear-weapon States are determined to cling to the doctrines of deterrence. All the indications, through their words and actions, are that they are determined to maintain their weapons indefinitely. In the past year these doctrines have been upheld in the strongest terms, and new ones are on the

drawing board. We recall the oft-quoted statement by Presidents Reagan and Gorbachev that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought". Why, then, should nuclear-weapon States maintain their nuclear arsenals? Why keep weapons that threaten human civilization?

Tanzania shares the view that the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is an important instrument of nuclear non-proliferation. As many will recall, however, our position with regard to the NPT has been largely critical. We have on many occasions expressed our dissatisfaction with its discriminatory nature and over the failure by nuclear-weapon States to live up to their obligations under the Treaty. For their part, the non-nuclear-weapon States have voluntarily given up any ambitions for nuclear programmes intended for military use.

Following the indefinite extension of the NPT in 1995 there had been hopes for universality, the observance of obligations by all parties and the conclusion of legally binding instruments on security assurances as well as on steps towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, those hopes seemed to evaporate into thin air. As of today, the Treaty has failed to achieve universality, particularly following nuclear tests in South Asia last year. The nuclear-weapon States have failed to honour their promise to pursue in good faith negotiations leading to a cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to total nuclear disarmament. The Preparatory Committee at its third session has also failed to make any substantive recommendations to the 2000 Review Conference.

In addition, nuclear-weapon States have failed to honour their commitment to provide non-nuclear-weapon States with legally binding assurances against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. This should have been done in return for non-nuclear-weapon States' legal commitment not to acquire such weapons.

Once again, my delegation reiterates its conviction of the validity of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice that

> "There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith, and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control."

Meanwhile, as a temporary measure, nuclear-weapon States are obliged to engage in serious negotiations leading to an unconditional, legally binding instrument, committing themselves to negative security assurances.

Regrettably, the Conference on Disarmament failed to reach a compromise on its programme work. We do not wish to question the integrity of the Conference on Disarmament, but my delegation would like to express its disappointment over its failure to register any tangible progress in the past three years. This is because a number of priority issues remain paralysed in the Conference on Disarmament, including the establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee to negotiate a ban on the production of fissile materials for weapons, and of working groups to discuss nuclear disarmament and prevention of an arms race in outer space. It is our hope that the new millennium will usher in the requisite political will to the Conference to engage in serious and meaningful negotiations.

My delegation attaches great importance to the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. The Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok are consistent with efforts towards global disarmament. The fact that nuclear-weapon-free zones cover more than 50 per cent of the globe attests to the conviction that such zones help promote nuclear disarmament, arms control and nuclear non-proliferation. Tanzania is committed to the establishment of nuclear weapon-free zones, a fact demonstrated by early ratification of the Treaty of Pelindaba.

We strongly support the establishment of such zones on the basis of agreements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned, including the Middle East and Central Asia. We believe that such zones will contribute to achieving the objective of a world free of nuclear weapons.

With respect to weapons of mass destruction, Tanzania strongly supports the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. Despite the fact that the Organization began its work only two years ago, it has been doing a commendable job. It is our hope that the Convention will achieve full universality in the not too distant future.

My delegation also takes this opportunity to urge intensification of efforts to negotiate a verification and compliance protocol for the Biological and toxin Weapons Convention. Tanzania hopes that these negotiations will be concluded at an early date.

Tanzania welcomes the entry into force early this year of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and of Their Destruction, and the First Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention, held in Maputo. We have always supported international efforts to ban anti-personnel mines, as they kill and maim innocent people long after the wars in which they were planted ended.

My delegation commends members of the international community for their assistance to demining activities in affected countries, particularly Africa. We urge them to redouble their demining efforts and also increase assistance to the victims of landmines.

Tanzania shares the great concerns over the excessive accumulation and proliferation of small arms and light weapons. We agree with the view that the international community should take effective measures to curb the illicit trade in small arms, which now threatens regional and international peace and security. Estimated to number 500 million in stock, small arms are not only instruments of violence in armed conflicts, but are also responsible for large numbers of civilian deaths and the displacement of innocent people. As a neighbour of one of the most volatile regions in Africa, Tanzania is quite familiar with the destabilizing effects of these arms. We firmly support the recommendations on the objectives and scope of the international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects, put forward by the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms.

In conclusion, I reiterate my delegation's conviction that as we approach the new millennium our biggest challenge remains the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I remind delegations that the deadline for draft resolutions on all disarmament and international security items is 6 p.m. Friday, 22 October. I urge delegations to present their draft as soon as possible, particularly those that may have financial implications.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.